

Know the Warning Signs of a Heart Attack

What is a heart attack?

A heart attack happens when the blood vessels that go to your heart get blocked by fatty deposits or a blood clot. When this happens, the blood supply is reduced or cut off. Then oxygen and other materials can't get through to your heart, hurting your heart muscle. Another name for a heart attack is myocardial infarction, or MI. **If you have diabetes, you're at risk for a heart attack.**

What are the warning signs of a heart attack?

The warning signs include

- chest pain or discomfort, pressure, or fullness. This might feel like indigestion or heartburn.
- discomfort in one or both of your arms, your back, jaw, neck, or stomach
- shortness of breath
- sweating or light-headedness
- indigestion or nausea or vomiting
- tiredness, fainting, or feeling lightheaded

You may not have all of these signs, and they may come and go. The most common warning sign for both men and women is chest pain. But women are more likely to have some of the other warning signs. If you have chest pain that doesn't go away after you rest for a few minutes, you might be having a heart attack.

What should I do if I have warning signs?

Call 9-1-1 within about 5 minutes. Ask for an ambulance to the hospital. Make sure your family and friends know when to call 9-1-1. Review the warning signs of a heart attack with them.

Why do I need to call 9-1-1 right away?

Getting medical care right after a heart attack can save your life. Medicines can

- prevent more blood clots



Call 9-1-1 right away if you have warning signs of a heart attack. Getting help can help save your life.

- help blood flow in your heart
- reduce chest pain

These steps work best within an hour of the first warning signs of a heart attack.

How are the signs of a heart attack different for people with diabetes?

Diabetes can affect your nerves and make heart attacks painless or “silent.” A silent heart attack means that you may not have any warning signs, or they may be very mild. Your health care provider might need to do special tests to see whether you've had a heart attack.

Real-Life Stories from People with Diabetes

When I had my heart attack, I felt sick to my stomach and had some pain in my neck and my arms. Those were the only warning signs. I thought it might be a heart attack, so I called 9-1-1 right away and was taken to the hospital. They did some tests and gave me medicine that broke up the blood clot in a blood vessel to my heart. — Carol Y., age 68 • type 2 diabetes

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